

THE LEISURE HOUR.

A FAMILY JOURNAL OF INSTRUCTION AND RECREATION.

"BEHOLD IN THESE WHAT LEISURE HOURS DEMAND,—AMUSEMENT AND TRUE KNOWLEDGE HAND IN HAND."—*Cooper.*



BOBBY PEEL PICKS OUT THE DOCTOR.

THE BLACK TROOPERS.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "ADVENTURES ASHORE AND AFLOAT."

CHAPTER I.—A MEETING.—THE RIDE ROUND THE RUN.

The drays with which I was travelling (it was in the month of March, 1849) had arrived as far as Lake Boga, on the Lower Murray River, within a day's journey of our destination. We had halted for the night close to a sheep-station established there. In the course of the evening, the gentleman in charge of it—Macfarlane was his name—walked

over to our camp; and I was informed by him that Mr. Stevenson, the superintendent of the run I was about to visit, had on the previous day ridden over to meet me, and had only returned home that afternoon. Having ascertained from him that I was a medical man, Mr. Macfarlane had come to invite me to his hut, and to ask me to visit one of his blacks, who had been wounded by a party from a tribe fifty miles up the river. These men had started originally for the purpose of surprising the blacks on Stevenson's station; but traces of their presence

in that neighbourhood having been discovered, they were forced to beat a retreat. In their rage at their disappointment, they had resolved, if possible, to slaughter some of the Lake blacks, rather than return empty-handed; but there also they were happily frustrated in their design, and only succeeded in wounding one man, whose leg they broke with a musket-ball.

After this second disappointment, it was confidently anticipated that they would, as they generally did when their intended surprise proves a failure, return home, and await a more favourable opportunity. But they did not do so in this instance, as the result will show; for I subsequently had an opportunity of witnessing a striking illustration of the savage and barbarous mode of warfare of the Australian Aboriginal, an opportunity not often afforded to the white man.

I set the wounded black's limb as well as I could with bark splints, and next day we started on our way to the banks of the Murray. The drays had to cross the river in order to reach the station I was going to. This was done by means of a punt, which had lately been built by a man who had also opened an inn for the use of travellers to South Australia, the road to which passed by the banks of the stream.

As we came in sight of this building, which was of weatherboard with a veranda in front, I saw a man standing in the middle of the track or road, and watching our approach; and upon drawing near, I observed that he was a black. When the driver, by whose team I was, recognised him, he uttered an exclamation, and stopped his dray.

"If there isn't that villain himself I was talking about to you, sir!"

"What do you mean?" I said.

"Why, I told you those blacks we heard of at the Lake yesterday, and who came to attack ours, wanted to kill one man in particular. That's him! His name is Bobby Peel, and he's the biggest rascal in the whole country round. It's a wonder he's alive yet, for when we left the run for this last trip to town, six or seven weeks ago, the black police were after him, and yet there he stands, as cool as you please, as if he hadn't ever killed a white man. Look at him!" he added, as his mate came up with his team.

"Why, it's Sir Robert! So he isn't settled yet. It isn't for want of trying; for if he's been shot at once, he has been twenty times at least. He'd a been dead long ago, only for our super, who won't let our men shoot him, as any one of them would only be too glad to do. There's not a place in the whole country round, where he durst show himself, only ours.

"How is that?" I asked.

"Because he's allers been a-robbing the out-station huts, sneaking in when the hut-keeper's away. He's a capital rider; and he'd get horses as he'd stole planted away in the bush, tethered handy: and he gallops off thirty miles one way, and robs a hut, and then gallops back and shows himself at our station. Then, when the squatters complain to our super about it, he says: 'It couldn't ha' been Bobby, 'cos Bobby was at my head station that day you say your hut was robbed.' Then next day, perhaps, away goes Master Bobby another way, and plays the same game! You see, he isn't like the other blacks, who're afraid to travel alone after dark on account of the 'devil-devil' they believe walk at night in the bush. But

he was bowled out at that game at last, not long before we started this last trip, and the super threatened he'd shoot him himself if he heard tell of any more of his games!"

The drays had moved on as he was speaking, and drew up at the door of the inn for the punt-man to put them across the river; but no one appeared, and we found upon entering that the publican was away, and that the women of the place had locked themselves into one of the rooms. Hearing our voices, and the teams stopping, they ventured out.

"Oh, Bill! is it you?" said the publican's wife to the driver; "I'm so glad: send that horrid man away. You know it was him killed Mr. Berridge. I wonder they let him go about that way, he ought to be shot! He knew my husband was away, and the punt-man gone across the river, or he wouldn't have dared to show."

"He would run very quickly if any of the young Mr. Berridges happened to come this way and catch sight of him," said the other woman. "They have often hunted for him."

I turned to look at the man thus spoken of, and who seemed to be an object of hatred to black and white alike. He was still standing in the middle of the road, where he could command a view up and down and across the river, so that no foe could approach him unobserved. He seemed about twenty-five, slenderly built and tall, and was dressed in a complete suit of cast-off European clothing—brown linen jacket, trousers, and waistcoat—so that at a distance he might pass for a European. His eye had that peculiar, watchful, suspicious glance characteristic of the hunted man: it never for an instant ceased to wander over the landscape, except now and then, when he fixed them upon me as I stood with the others in the veranda. He was a good-looking fellow for a black, but there was a dark and desperate expression lurking beneath the appearance of carelessness which he put on under the looks of our party.

"How he looks at you, doctor!" said the driver.

"Hullo! here he comes. What's he got to say?" and, paying no regard to the women, who ordered him off, the black walked up to where I stood.

"Name—you?" he said, looking keenly at me.

"He wants to know your name," said the driver, Bill.

"This one—doc—doc?" he asked the man, and pointing at the same time to me.

"See that, now!" said the other driver; "if he doesn't know already you're a doctor! How could he know that?"

"Easy enough!" said his comrade. "Either he was at the Lake, or else met some black from there, and they've told him about the doctor setting the other one's leg; that's how he knows."

Meanwhile Bobby went back to the middle of the road, and, after casting a comprehensive glance all round, beckoned to me to go to him.

"Don't you go near him, sir," said the women; "it's well known he has killed many white men, and you may depend his spears are lying handy somewhere close by!" But I had no fears on that score, and curious to know what he could want with me, I left the rest and approached him. He led the way to the river-bank, which was about thirty or forty yards in front of the house, and very steep, and descended the cutting in it formed to permit the drays to be driven down on to the deck of the punt. Here

he was hidden from the sight of those in the veranda, but he kept in such a position that he could see over the top of the cutting if any of the party approached. I had told them, however, not to follow me, as I intended to keep within call. Here Bobby threw off his jacket, and showed me his left shoulder and arm, on which were the marks of two wounds. Upon examining, I found that two slugs had lodged in them, and the black intimated that he wished me to cut them out. One had entered and lodged above the shoulder-blade, and was easily extracted by the forceps of my pocket-case, aided by a slight incision. The other had entered half-way up the arm, and travelled along downwards until it reached the elbow, where it prevented free motion of the joint. This required rather a deep incision to get out, but he stood it without flinching. The whole affair did not occupy many minutes; and when it was over he said,—

"You got um—'bacca?"

I had a cake of cavendish in my pocket, and I gave it him, and he then stretched out his arm with a pleased look at having again recovered the free use of it. Then, taking me by the hand, he said,—

"Good white fellow, you!" Then looking round at the house near, and spreading his hand out to indicate all the stations about his native place, he said, while a savage scowl settled upon his face,—

"All about—white fellow—no good!" and he shook his fist and uttered a fearful execration. For, ignorant as most blacks are of English, in swearing at us they rapidly become proficient. Just then we heard the noise of a horse's hoofs coming down the road, and after giving one look over the bank at the rider, Bobby turned to me and said,—

"Good-bye, doc, doc!" and plunged into the river, gained the other side, and disappeared in the reeds which just there grew in thick patches. He had good reason for leaving in a hurry. The horseman was one of the sons of a neighbouring squatter whom he, in conjunction with others, had the credit of having killed. Vengeance had overtaken all his companions in that exploit; but Bobby was still at large.

* * * * *

The squatting-station of which Mr. Stevenson was the superintendent was of very considerable size, extending for twenty miles along one side of the Murray, and for nearly the same distance back from the stream, which there flows through a level country consisting of open plains alternating with belts and forests of timber, the latter giving place in many parts to patches, more or less extensive, of Mallee scrub. Three-fourths of the run were reserved for sheep, the remainder for cattle, the head station huts being placed on the river-banks, not far from the crossing-place. Besides the superintendent, the only other occupant of his hut was a young gentleman named Harris, who acted as overseer, and who was fitting himself for one day being able to manage a station of his own.

I had been some weeks on the run when Stevenson invited me to accompany him and the overseer on a visit of inspection they were about to make round to the different out-stations. The main object of this ride round was to supply the hut-keepers and shepherds with some strychnine he had just received from Melbourne, and with which he intended, if possible, to destroy the dingoes, or warrigals (wild dogs), whose ravages amongst the sheep had of late been frightful, twenty, thirty, and in one instance thirty-

seven sheep of a flock being bitten in a single night. And as every sheep bitten, however slightly, dies (pining away as if poisoned by the wound), and as there were eight or nine out-stations, each equally exposed to attack, the losses may be imagined. Four hundred were killed, or died, during the first fortnight of my visit; indeed, the gentleman who formed the station some two years previously had sold it solely on account of this pest. Stevenson had determined to try what systematic poisoning of the run would do to diminish if not destroy this nuisance.*

It was a beautiful morning in April, the beginning of the Australian winter, when we started on our trip, which was to occupy two days. Our first day's ride was almost one continued hunt, for on nearly every plain we passed over, one or more groups of kangaroo were visible, and as my companions had brought their two dogs with them, chase was always given, and to me, who had lately been cooped up on shipboard, the change was glorious. The day was warm, but a cool breeze swept over the plains. We were mounted on stock horses, fleet, and in excellent trim; the dogs were well bred, and always selected the foremost kangaroo of the herd, passing by all the rest, and as this animal often runs in a circle, and the plains were frequently two or three miles or more in diameter, the hunt was in full view from the beginning to the end.

It was curious to watch the hawks, which to my surprise had followed us all day, ever since we left the home station. They had found out by experience that when the dogs accompanied the horsemen, a dinner was always left for them on the plains. High above us they followed the course of the chase, and when kangaroo and dogs were lost in the timber, we could always tell, by watching the hawks, the direction they were taking. At the cattle-station where we passed the night the old stockman, Steve, assured me that these birds had learned to distinguish between his cattle dogs and the kangaroo hounds, as they never offered to accompany him in his daily rides unless he had the latter with him.

The consequences of all this rough bush-riding were, however, rather unpleasant to me, who had not mounted a horse, except at rare intervals, for years; and when we started next morning to resume our journey I had some difficulty in reaching my saddle, and hoped that our ride home would be a more quiet one. In this, however, I was disappointed, for we had scarcely left the cattle-station a mile before the dogs sighted an emu; and after killing that, some wild cattle from the Mallee were seen, and a long gallop after them ensued, in which my horse, a wilful, hard-mouthed brute, would take part, despite my protests to the contrary: so that by noon I was completely done up and heartily wished the day's ride were ended.

As we came up to an out-station hut close to the border of the cattle-run, the hut-keeper stood at the door to receive us.

"I expected you yesterday, sir," he said; "or else old Steve."

"Why?"

"Didn't you get my message?" the man asked.

"No; I got no message; what about?"

"There's been some games going on among the cattle," replied the hut-keeper. "The shepherd thought he heard a shot early in the morning, and

* The dingo is now almost extinct in Victoria. Strychnine has during the last fifteen years hastened its extermination.

saw them scampering out of the timber on to the plain where his sheep were. Here is the shepherd coming now," he added; "he must have seen you riding across the plain."

The man presently reached the hut, and corroborated the hut-keeper's statement, adding that he thought he saw a spear sticking in the side of a beast which passed nearer him than the rest of the herd.

"I knew there were blacks about the day before, for I see their tracks; and I bet any money," he added, "it's that vagabond Bobby Peel and his mob have been killing a beast."

"He had better not go too far," said Stevenson, with an ominous look. "Which part of the timber was it, Dick, and when did it happen?"

"Day before yesterday; there was a traveller passed here that morning on his way down to the river, and he said he intended staying that night at the head station, and would tell you."

"He never called. What kind of a traveller—a horseman?"

"No, sir; a shepherd looking for a job, with his swag on his back. He must have passed the station and gone on to the public-house; yet he promised faithfully to tell you."

OLD TAXES AND TAX-PAPERS.

ACCORDING to Pope, the highest attainment of female equanimity is when a woman is "mistress of herself though china fall." One may say, in the same way, that the highest attainment of male equanimity is to be master of one's temper when tax-papers come pouring in. To come down to breakfast in the morning and find among your letters the collector's demand for the Queen's taxes; to return from your walk and see at your door the well-known figure with the black portfolio, from which he hands you the curt missive, requiring you to "take notice" that the parish rates are due, and must be paid forthwith under penalties: this is enough to spoil the enjoyment of the day, and to cast a gloom over the brightest sunshine of summer. Political economy, with all its boasted progress, has not succeeded in devising any means of gilding the bitter pill; indeed, the discovery of a scheme for making the payment of taxes a pleasant process may be ranked in value and difficulty with the discovery of the philosopher's stone or the elixir of life. It is, however, a grim satisfaction to know that we are not alone in our misfortune; our ancestors have paid taxes before us, and our descendants will doubtless be distressed by rates to the latest generation. Still, even tax-papers, odious as they are, acquire, like harsh new wine, a certain not unpleasant flavour and mellowness by keeping; and when they are a century or two old they become literary curiosities, which may be viewed with considerable interest, and even no small instruction.

We have just had placed in our hands a little packet of old tax-papers, ranging in date from 1674 to 1756, and we have found them curious and pleasant illustrations of the history of England during several reigns, and especially during that of William III; our pleasure being no doubt intensified by the consciousness that the taxes were all paid, and that not the most tyrannical chancellor of the exchequer could demand from us repayment of them. So far as we recollect, Macaulay, who ransacked broadsheets and

every available quarter for materials for his history, has never condescended to allude to tax-papers; yet, in looking over this bundle of old papers we have been perpetually reminded of Macaulay's history, and brilliant passages which we had read years ago seemed to have fresh light and a deeper interest imparted to them. We recommend to collectors this new source of illustration; and we shall attempt to show the reader how even tax-papers may be made to lend interest to history.

When William of Orange was on his march from Torbay to London he was everywhere importuned by the common people to relieve them from the intolerable burden of the *hearth money*. "This tax," to quote Macaulay, "seems to have united all the worst evils which can be imputed to any tax. It was unequal, and unequal in the most pernicious way; for it pressed heavily on the poor, and lightly on the rich. A peasant, all whose property was not worth twenty pounds, had to pay several shillings, while the mansion of an opulent nobleman in Lincoln's Inn Fields or Saint James's Square was seldom assessed at two guineas. The collectors were empowered to examine the interior of every house in the realm, to disturb families at meals, to force the doors of bedrooms, and if the sum demanded were not punctually paid, to sell the trencher on which the barley loaf was divided among the poor children, and the pillow from under the head of the lying-in woman." William promised to use his influence in obtaining a repeal of the hated tax; and in the first parliament summoned by him, in 1689, "the chimney tax was declared a badge of slavery, and was abolished for ever." Amongst our bundle of old papers we have fortunately lit upon a receipt for the payment of the hearth money for the last time it was levied in England, from which it would appear that landlords sometimes paid this tax instead of their poor tenants.

"7 b^r (i.e. September) the 4, 1600 and eighty-nine. Received of *Gabr: Armiger Esq^r*. the sum of *eighteen* shillings, in full for one half-year's Duty for 18 Fire hearths in his 3 Houses in *North Creeke* due and ended at Lady-day last past. I say received by

"*J. Gardynner, Collector.*"

The reader who may have had the same pleasure of paying any tax for the last time, will appreciate the pleasure with which *Gabr: Armiger Esq^r*. handed his eighteen shillings to the collector, and will probably believe with us that gratitude prompted him to preserve the receipt as a trophy of his deliverance from an odious exaction.

No one who has read Macaulay's history can ever forget that famous chapter, in which, with his wonderful skill, he conjures up before the mind's eye the England of the reign of Charles II. What novel possesses the interest of the description of London as it then was? Who has not smiled at the picture of the metropolis by night, and the dangers of its streets; pails emptied upon the unhappy wayfarers from garret-windows, deep ruts in which men plunged in the dark, gangs of thieves and robbers plying their trade with impunity, troops of dissolute gentlemen, Muns and Tityre Tus, and Hectors and Mohawks, swaggering along, disturbing the peace, and insulting every one they met, while all around the city lay in almost total darkness? The first feeble attempt to light up the metropolis by night was made, Macaulay tells us, "by an ingenious projector, who undertook for a moderate consideration to place a light before every

tenth door, on moonless nights, from Michaelmas to Lady Day." The historian has not told us what this "moderate consideration" was, or what was the nature of the lighting process adopted; but here our tax-papers come to our aid and explain that the "consideration" was a sort of tax on the inhabitants of certain streets, and that *convex lights*, something we suppose like the bull's-eyes of modern lanterns, was the mode of illumination employed.

"The 30th Day of June, 169 nyne.

Received of Mr. Cartwright for the use
of the proprietors of the Convex-Lights, }
six shillings in full for two Quarters Rent, } 8
due and ending at Lady-day last. } 6

By Glover Johnson, Collector."

Another of our receipts, dated "the 29th day of February, 1699," is curious for many reasons. The very date is noteworthy: the official year in those times began on the 25th of March, so that 1699 in the receipt is 1700 according to the present mode of reckoning. Perhaps the reader will suggest that 1700 ought not to have been a leap-year, and that the receipt is wrong dated. True, according to the modern calendar, 1700 should not have been a leap-year; but the calendar had not yet been rectified, and it had not yet been decided that the last year of a century should not be a leap-year unless the figures preceding the ciphers were divisible by four. In its date, therefore, this receipt is a curiosity; and it is equally curious in the exactness with which it specifies the total amount granted by parliament to King William, which it seems was exactly "one million, four hundred eighty-four thousand and fifteen pounds, one shilling and eleven pence three farthings." When we add that this singular sum was granted for disbanding the army, the reader will understand that it refers to that transaction which almost broke the heart of William of Orange, the resolution of parliament, in spite of all his entreaties, to disband the army after the peace of Ryswick.

Another receipt, dated on no less famous a day than the *fifth of November*, 1709, acknowledges the payment by "John Clarke" of five shillings for half a year's assessment, charged upon his dwelling-house, by virtue of an Act of Parliament, "for granting several rates and duties upon houses, for making good the deficiency of the clipped money." Does the reader understand what is meant by *clipped money*? In our days the crime is almost unknown, but at the close of the seventeenth century it was fearfully frequent in England, and threatened to produce some great national financial crisis. For ages the coins had simply been stamped by hammering; their rims were not marked; they were seldom exactly round; and they varied in size and weight even when intended to be of the same value. This state of the coinage almost tempted fraud; nothing was easier than to clip a little silver from the irregular edge, and by this process enormous fortunes were realised. The most severe punishments were inflicted; seven men were hanged and one woman was branded in a single morning; but the temptation was too strong. New coins with milled edges were issued, but they were melted as fast as they appeared; nothing was in circulation except the old coins, which were becoming smaller and smaller by daily clippings. What was called a *shilling* was sometimes not worth more than fourpence. The country was filled with distress and complaints of men who were continually defrauded;

everything rose in price; disturbances were apprehended, and parliament debated the subject for many days. It was agreed at last to recoin all the money, and issue it in full-weight with milled edges to prevent further clipping; and the loss which would thus be incurred, amounting to more than a million, was to be repaid to the Bank of England from taxes of various kinds levied on the public, of which in our little bundle we have more than one interesting memorial.

One other receipt from our budget is of sufficient interest to be submitted to the reader.

"Received the 17th day of March, 1712, of Sir Wm. Milman, the sum of fifteen shillings, for half a year's assessment due at Michaelmas last, charged upon his dwelling-house, by virtue of an Act of Parliament made in the 8th year of the reign of our Sovereign Lady Queen Anne, entitled, 'An Act for continuing part of the duties upon coals, culm, and cynders, and granting new duties upon houses having twenty windows or more, to raise the sum of fifteen hundred thousand pounds, by way of a lottery, for the service of the year One thousand seven hundred and ten.'"

Our younger readers will be somewhat amazed to read of money being raised "by way of lottery" for state purposes. Such a thing was, however, by no means unusual in our history, especially at periods when any extraordinary expenditure was incurred, as was the case during the long and expensive French wars in Anne's reign. Lotteries for state purposes are as old as the reign of Elizabeth, and were not abolished till 1826. They, of course, produced and fostered that reckless spirit of gambling which still attends state lotteries on the continent; such was the excitement on the day when the prizes were drawn, that it was customary for medical practitioners to mingle with the crowd, that they might be at hand to bleed any one who was overpowered with the announcement of the disappointment or the unexpected fulfilment of his hopes. Altogether, we have reason to congratulate ourselves on the moral progress which has swept state lotteries from the statute-book.

The *Sir William Milman* whose receipt we have printed above, was a person of some note, of whom, were it necessary, we might have something to say. He belonged to the Inner Temple, and died at Chelsea, a few months after the payment of his rates—his name being still preserved in a street in Chelsea called Milman's Row. Among our papers, we have also preserved the receipt for "his quarter's assessment for his pews in St. George's Chapel"—probably St. George's, Hanover Square—for which he was charged the considerable sum of one pound two shillings and sixpence.

Other receipts in our bundle are more akin to those with which we are ourselves familiar: window-lights, water-rates to the Chelsea and the New River Companies, land-tax, sewer-rates, rates to scavengers, to watchmen, and "bedels" of the parish—these need no comment, but appeal at once to our "business and bosoms;" and even a rate "to the preacher-assistant of St. James's, Westminster," and an assessment for the rebuilding of the Church of St. Martin-in-the-Fields, will be readily intelligible to the modern tax-payer.

We have been so little accustomed to look upon tax-papers without fear and trembling, that the perusal of this little bundle, which doubtless grieved

many a sturdy Englishman six generations ago, has been to us quite a novel pleasure, and has opened up quite a new field of speculation. Are there any receipts in existence, we wonder, of the Commonwealth, any memorials of the ship-money of the reign of Charles, or of the tonnage and poundage of still earlier times? History will not disdain to peruse such documents, and may receive from them an interest and information not accessible elsewhere. It is possible even, it seems, in some measure, to recover something of the sums which taxes and rates have filched from our pockets; our descendants may be repaid in amusement, if not in the coin of the realm. Let the tax-payer of our day, after duly grumbling at the hard destiny which makes him the victim of so many assessors and collectors, carefully preserve his tax-papers, seal them up, and order them to be kept unopened for a hundred and fifty years. They will then have lost their power to destroy any man's equanimity, and our descendant in the fifth generation will read with wonder and with profit what will throw no small light on the manners and history of the reign of Queen Victoria.

THE PENINSULA OF SINAI.

BY JOHN KEAST LORD, F.R.S., NATURALIST TO THE EGYPTIAN EXPLORATION EXPEDITIONS.

CHAPTER XIII.—SARABET-EL-CHADEM.

WE determined to start early on Monday morning, so that little more could be done at Nasb except to make all the needful preparations for travelling. The morning for departure came in due course, and exceedingly beautiful it turned out. The wind had been blowing hard all the night, but lulled towards daybreak. The temperature in the tent during the night was 75° Fahrenheit. Our camel arrangements had undergone a very great change; the provisions were considerably lightened, and fewer camels were required; moreover, many of the Bedouins who started with us from Suez did not care to go farther than Nasb, so they, with their camels, went back again. Amongst the number who left us was my camel driver, so I have seen the last of my trusty old spite of a camel, "Woolly Legs." The new dromedary told off for me was of slender and ladylike make, but I did not like her appearance, mischief lurked in her eye. I mounted her all right, and she got up with only some trifling display of temper, to be led off growling ominously. The baggage camels did not travel by the same route as we took with our dromedaries. They went by way of Wady Lechian, while we followed the gorge up which I went to see the rock writings at the gap.

At the head of the gorge we crossed a watershed by a very narrow and somewhat dangerous path. Once or twice my slender camel made a terrible stumble that came very near to sending me over her head; but thanks to my new attendant—who certainly appeared to be a very old man—she was led in safety over all the difficult ground. One may travel a long way without finding a more wild and beautiful scene than suddenly bursts upon the traveller as he reaches the summit of this ridge. On the one hand a long wide wady—I believe called by the Bedouins Wady Lechian—stretches away as far as the eye can trace it. Acacia-trees of very large size grow along its whole extent; and as we look down upon

their wide-spreading branches from the height of land, the wady appears almost like a dense forest. In the other direction immense piles of rocks, bare of all vegetation, rugged in outline, striped and scarred by intrusive dykes of black lava that remind one of lines of fortification, shut off all the world beyond. There is to my mind a gloomy grandeur about these rocky heights, unlike any other mountain scenery I ever visited. I have roamed over the snowy summits of the Rocky and Cascade Mountains—crossed the craggy Alps—wandered up the vine-clad slopes of Mount Vesuvius—and looked with wonder and delight at the bold and serried outlines of Mounts Hecla and Etna; but an indescribable something, a solemnity, a solitude, a kind of sacred, mysterious awe, surrounds these mountains in the wilderness, which gives to them a character entirely their own. We follow the course of Wady Lechian, which is extremely beautiful, being shut in by lofty cliffs of bare rocks on either side and plentifully studded with acacia-trees; then turning eastward, enter Wady Saaou, and camp at Sarabet-el-Chadem late in the afternoon. By the time we had got fairly under canvas the wind had increased to a complete gale, carrying along such clouds of fine sand that venturing outside the tent was to risk partial suffocation.

The next morning was fine, calm, and extremely hot; at six o'clock the thermometer stood at 75° Faht. in the tent. We intended to climb the mountain and visit the curious ruins on the summit, but the proper guides did not arrive, so it was postponed to the day following. Our camp was close under some lofty cliffs of barren rock. In front and to the right a sandy waste, studded thickly with little hillocks, stretched away for miles in an unbroken level, and these same little mounds of sand, each covered with a scrubby growth of aromatic plants, bore no inapt resemblance to islands in a huge lake; while in the other direction a narrow kind of gorge, thickly covered with fine sand, that had been blown into it by gales of wind, and reminded one of drift snow, led into the wady we had travelled through. The rocks behind our tents were quite 300 feet high, and to the eastward a splendid peak towered up 1,400 feet above the level of the camp. The great sandy plateau of Ramleh abuts, if I may so say, against the end of Wady Saaou, in which we were encamped, and forms a kind of square edge over which the extremely fine sand regularly rushes down like water over a ledge of rocks.

I started away collecting, but did not add very considerably to my stock; I met with only one or two birds here that I had not before seen, and very few insects. This may be owing, and I feel sure it is, to the want of water. There is no water, so far as I know, nearer than at Wady Nasb, and we had to send back a detachment of camels for a supply, lest we might run short before arriving at the next wells, at Genneh. I was extremely interested in watching a small ant, that, for want of a better name, I dubbed the "robber ant." His colour is grey to the eye, and he closely resembles the sand over which his hunting exploits are carried on. I feel quite certain that this ant does not live in a community as ants do generally, but shifts for himself, and, like a genuine freebooter, has no settled abode. His system of hunting is to creep with extreme caution towards any tiny insect that may be resting on or walking over the sand, then, when sufficiently close, to make a

spring and seize the unsuspecting victim. The distance this ant is able to leap is beyond belief, and how it contrives to propel itself the distance I have seen it leap, is more than I am able to explain, for the legs are shaped and proportioned like the legs of other ants, and they are not, as a rule, remarkable for saltatory feats. More than once I have seen it pounce upon an ant of another species, and a terrible battle has been the result; but in every instance to which I have been witness, the "robber" has come off the victor. I had scarcely reached my tent, on my return from my collecting expedition, when a heavy shower of rain completely drenched everything. It did not continue long, but so cooled the air and heated sand that the night appeared actually cold. Had it been so every night sleeping would have conduced to refresh and invigorate rather than enervate and exhaust one, as it usually did. We arranged to start the next day soon after sunrise, to visit Sarabet-el-Chadem. Our party consisted of five of the soldiers, the two dragomans, the Bedouin guides, and our three selves.

The first part of the way was over undulating ground that led from the camp towards the lofty hills behind it. Here the travelling was easy and pleasant, until we came plump against a vertical wall of rock about 100 feet high, that looked so smooth and polished that I believe water during the time of a heavy flood must flow over it like a cataract. My first idea was that we could go no farther, but I was soon undeceived, for the Bedouin guides making use of some inequalities in the face of the rock, began to ascend it as though they were going up a comfortable flight of stairs. This might be all very well for Arabs, but I had a lively presentiment that I should never accomplish the feat of climbing up the face of the rock, unless I had feet constructed after the plan of a blowing-fly's. Come what may, however, I determined to make the attempt; so two Bedouins, taking firmly hold of my hands, went in front, while a soldier helped me along behind; and by dint of pushing and pulling, although once or twice we were all three as near as possible tumbling to the bottom; at last, out of breath, and with my limbs in a partial state of dislocation, I was landed on the top of the cliff. This was only the commencement of the work; a long and arduous climb lay ahead of us up a narrow gorge in the mountain. Every here and there we had to scramble over immense masses of rock which had weathered off and rolled down into the gorge from the overhanging cliffs. Sometimes we wedged our way betwixt the rocks, the space being so narrow as to necessitate our going sideways, while two or three times I had to be dragged up bodily by the Arabs over massive boulders, which had completely blocked the way. Scarcely any trace of vegetation was to be seen, and consequently very little sign of animal life, except high in the air a few vultures soaring lazily about with motionless wings, a sparrowhawk we had disturbed from his siesta, and a couple of croaking ravens, that seemed to scan us from their rocky home with no very cordial feelings. Everything round about was still, ghostly, and deathlike.

At length we reached the plateau upon which the celebrated ruins are placed, which is about 600 feet above the level of the plain, whereon is our encampment, and 2,290 feet above the sea level. Looking at the ruins from the top of the gorge, they suggest the idea of a small church having fallen into decay

in the midst of very tall head-stones; but as we get nearer it is evident that there must have been more buildings than one—the remains of a temple, or possibly a necropolis, we could not decide positively which, for all lay in crumbled confusion. Fragments of columns, blocks of masonry, pieces of rude sculpture, broken pottery, stones and dust, made up together a jumble of material out of which nothing definite could be shaped or fashioned. I employed the men I had with me to excavate, but nothing of any great moment rewarded our labours. A chamber was traceable at the eastern end of the ruins hewn out in the solid rock, supported by a pillar of the same kind of rock, ingeniously cut for the purpose. The whole mass lies nearly east and west, and is about seventy feet broad, and surrounded by a low wall of rude masonry. Below the supposed temple there are a couple of small quarries in the red sandstone from which the blocks have been dug whereon hieroglyphics are sculptured. These upright blocks or steles are amongst the most curious parts of the present ruin. There were twelve standing when we visited the place. They are from eight to ten feet in height, rounded at the top and fairly well faced. The rock from which they are hewn is a compact sandstone, and they do not appear to be distributed with any regard to uniformity of distances or position. Thickly covering both sides are hieroglyphic inscriptions. On some of the stones the figures are still quite fresh, but on others the action of the weather and the sand has very nearly obliterated them.

I may here remark that these extremely curious ruins (so it is said) were first of all discovered by Niebuhr. When he was travelling across the Peninsula, he was very desirous to visit the Wady Mok-Kateb, or valley of the writings. But the Bedouins, not clearly comprehending what he really did want, conducted him to Sarabet-el-Chadem. Doctors differ, and several theories have been propounded by different explorers to account for the presence of these singular Egyptian monuments. It would prove of very little interest to the general reader to recount them; but from the investigations of Lepsius and others we learn this much—that the inscriptions are in a great measure memorials of the turquoise mines which are near by. The whole district is designated upon the steles as Mafkat, or Copper Land, and was under the protection of the goddess Hathor, who was called mistress of Mafkat. The temple at Sarabet-el-Chadem was dedicated to that goddess, and the greater part of it was erected during the last dynasty of the old monarchy, by Amenemha-Moeris. The meaning of the name Sarabet-el-Chadem is variously given.

Sarabet is the word applied by the Bedouins to any protuberance, mound, or hill, from the hump on a camel's back to a lofty mountain, while *Khadem*, ring, may refer to the discus wrought round the steles or the encircling wall. The place would then signify the Hill of Rings. Dr. Abeken differs from this opinion, defining *Khadem* as servant or slave; and holds that the name may have been given in view of the slaves who were sacrificed there; and this was certainly the way both our dragomans interpreted Sarabet-el-Chadem. The most ancient king figured on the steles, says Ritter, seems to be Suefren, who is represented twice as kneeling, and once as dead. He seems to have ruled long before the twelfth dynasty. The most distant stele at the highest part of the temple plateau

is devoted to Sesortasen I, the predecessor of the great Sesostrius. A little rock grotto is set apart in honour of Amenemha-Mœris, and its vestibule to his successor Amenemha IV, with whose reign the twelfth dynasty of the ancient monarchy closes. There are no memorials, as might be expected, of the period of Hyksos; but there are those of later kings, Amenophis I, Tutmes III, Tutmes IV, Amenophis IV, Meneptha, under whose reign the Israelites went out of Egypt, and others. Dr. Robinson seems to think it a sacred place of pilgrimage visited by the ancient Egyptians, much after the fashion of the yearly pilgrimages to Mecca nowadays. I, however, am disposed to believe the place, for whatever purpose it was appropriated, owed its origin to the miners who once mined there for turquoise, and possibly for copper at the same time.

Diligently as I searched, I failed to discover any trace of human remains, and so far as I have been able to find out from inquiry, no mummy has yet been disinterred in these ruins. I found quantities of broken glass, some fragments of sculptured white alabaster, a great many sea-shells rubbed down to a particular pattern, with a hole drilled through them—these were evidently once strung as beads—one or two scarabei made of stone, small and very much defaced. The plateau upon which the ancient buildings stand is not, by any means, an even surface, but a series of rounded mounds, that at a distance resemble heaps of slag; but this appearance is due to the outcropping of beds of iron and manganese, which overlie beds of shale, through which is distributed a small quantity of green carbonate of copper, very similar to that in the mines already referred to at Wady Khalig.

Bestrewing the surface of most of the mounds were quantities of flint flakes, and pieces of flint tools which had been employed as chisels or gads for mining. Wherever the flint tools were plentiful, there too we found a great many stone hammers. Sketches of these will be given further on. The shape of these hammers was by no means constant, but varied to some extent, in accordance with the original form of the stone selected for the purpose. On some of them the mark of the thumb and fingers was perfectly distinct, the stone being worn away where it was grasped in using. There can be no doubt that on some of the mounds the flints were split, and the flakes formed into the shape required for mining purposes. Heaps of fragments were here and there scattered round a central point, as if some person or persons had sat there working, and thrown the *débris* away from them. There were also numbers of large flints which had probably been brought for the purpose of splitting into flakes. Whether the stone hammers were employed in splitting the larger flints or for hammering the chisels in extracting the turquoises, it is by no means easy to decide. My own impression is that they were used mainly for breaking or splitting the large masses of flint, so as to reduce them into usable flakes for making chisels or gads, arrow and spear heads, all of which implements we afterwards found, and which are figured for a coming chapter. For working the flint chisels I am pretty sure wooden mallets were employed, as I shall be able by-and-by to shew.

Not very far away from the ruins are two caves, near the entrance into which there are a great many hieroglyphics, and these, I believe, prove the so-called caves to be of great antiquity, and places

where turquoises were once mined. It is quite evident, on examining the old workings, that the turquoises were sought for and occurred in a bed of ferruginous sandstone laying about fifteen feet below the limestone beds, which form a capping to many of the lesser hills on the plateau. Tool marks are still distinctly visible over the faces of the sandstone, and these exactly correspond with the sizes and points of the flint chisels or gads we picked up on the mounds, leaving little if any doubt that the softish sandstone was pounded away by the steady percussive impact of the stone chisels struck with wooden mallets. The turquoises are found principally in cracks and seams in the sandstone, but so well as we could judge they were few and far between. The Bedouins even now try to find a few of the gems in these mines, as they get a large price for them in Cairo. Their plan of mining is by blasting the rock.

I hardly ever saw a more dismal place than the barren hilltop of Sarabet-el-Chadem; the wind whistled and moaned amidst the mounds, and down the ravines cut in the mountain side, although the sun shone brilliantly and the sky was blue and cloudless. The Bedouins tell me the wind is always blowing on the top of this mountain. Not a bird, nor a plant, nor an insect could I find. I saw the tracks of a hyena, but what the beast could have hoped to find in so barren a spot I am at a loss to imagine. I am utterly at my wits' end as to the motive the persons had in view who built the temple and other buildings of Sarabet-el-Chadem, and erected the engraved stones, in choosing such a terribly exposed and barren place, nearly inaccessible, and a great many miles away from any source of perennial water. They could have had no chance of obtaining anything but a precarious supply of rain-water, except they fetched it from Nash, or elsewhere quite as far away. And it is not very probable that they depended upon the rainfall for their water-supply, inasmuch as there are no tanks or reservoirs of any kind for collecting it. I cannot think smelting was ever carried on, because there is no slag, the heaps of so-called slag being only fragments of the ores of iron and manganese. In all cases where we discovered the traces of ancient smelting works, they were in every instance some distance away from the mines whence the copper was obtained, and invariably close to a permanent supply of water. The choosing of such a site must, I apprehend, have been in consequence of some religious motive, of which we are in ignorance.

CHAPTER XIV.—WADY CHAMILE.

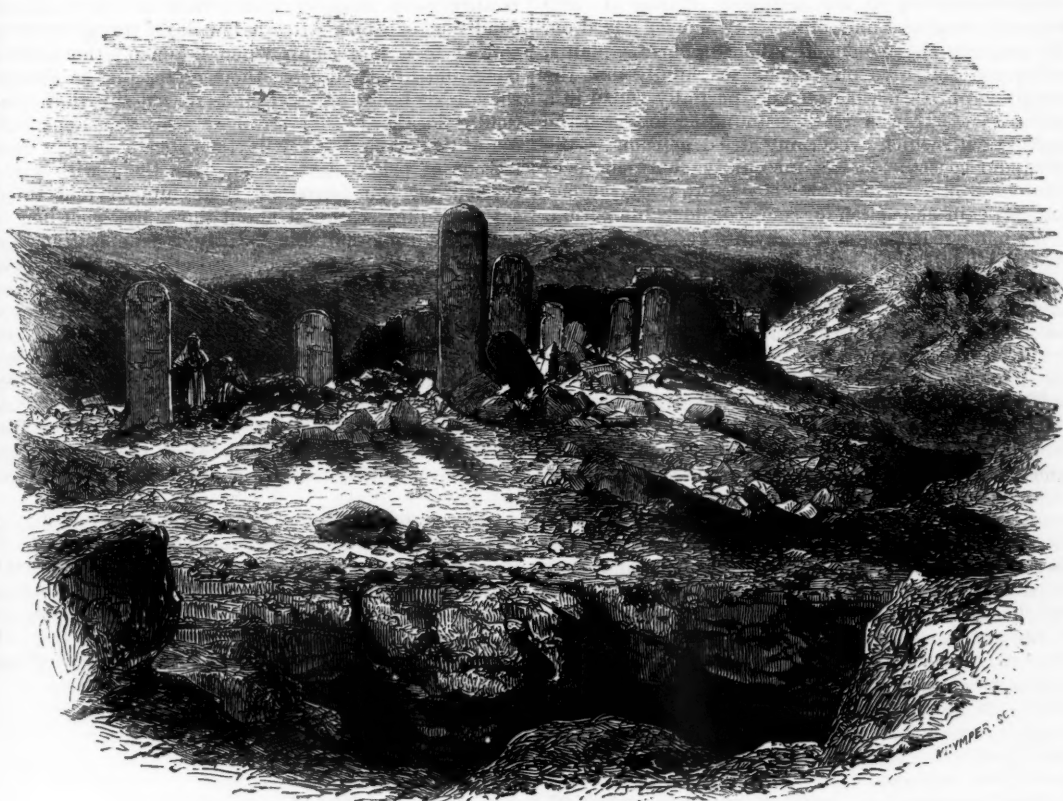
It was extremely pleasant to reach our tents, and enjoy a comfortable night's repose, after the toil of exploring the ruins of Sarabet-el-Chadem. This inspection completed, there was no further inducement to prolong our stay at this camping-ground.

I may mention here, that the acacia-trees growing in the Wady Baba are the oldest I noticed anywhere on the Peninsula, and many of them have attained to a goodly size. From the semi-polished condition of the trunks of some of the larger trees, it is pretty evident that the Bedouins frequently take their mid-day rest leaning their backs against the tree trunks, sheltered from the sun by the wide-spreading branches.

We were quite prepared to start at eight in the morning. The baggage train had already moved on.

with the exception of a few camels retained to carry our tents. I said that I had no great faith in my new and extremely slender dromedary. To-day, as I came toward her, where she lay in readiness for me to mount, her look was spiteful, she groaned viciously, and twisted about her long snake-like neck, in a

the northward. Our course lay up through Wady Saaou, which has a south-easterly bearing. For about a distance of five miles the wady is wide, rather sandy, but quite bare of plants. The width is somewhere about a mile. At the head of the wady we ascended a steep hill leading over a high pass



TOMBES AT SARABET-EL-CHADEM.

manner that clearly foreboded rebellion. My old Arab attendant was not present, but in his place were two younger Bedouins, who held this unruly lady by the headstall, and each had his foot planted firmly upon her front leg, so as to prevent her from suddenly rising up. Much against my inclination I sprang across the saddle, but no sooner was I seated than she was upon her legs in a moment, sending the Bedouins to the right and left, and myself clear out of the saddle, astride upon her neck. Where I should have been carried, had she made her escape, it is impossible to say, but most fortunately the other Arabs made a rush at her and seized the halter. To show her perversity, the moment the men caught hold of the halter, down she threw herself, and, of course, off I rolled upon the sandy plain, glad enough to get so easily clear of such an ill-tempered beast. Not that I escaped unhurt, for I could hardly move for several days afterwards. My mind was made up there and then not to bestride a camel any more, so long as I had strength to walk, a resolution I held to until near the conclusion of the exploration.

For a wonder, the sky was overcast with heavy clouds, and a cold wind blew nearly half a gale from

into Wady Chamilé. As we toiled up the narrow path leading to the summit of the pass, the rain came down in actual torrents, completely saturating us. I can easily imagine, from witnessing this sudden rainfall, how it happens that the wadies are so rapidly converted into water channels. Even this summer rain was quite sufficient to cause a fair-sized stream to pour down the path we were following, and through which we had to wade ankle deep.

On one side of the pass the cliffs towered up to a great height, and near the summit, which is 2,100 feet above the level of the sea, an outpour of lava of a black columnar character for some distance completely covered up the sandstone rocks through which it had at some time forced its way. We proceeded along Wady Chamilé, which runs in a south-easterly direction, but having a very gradual descent. No trees grow in it, but an abundance of the "retem," broom (*Retama retam*), with a fair supply of grass and flowering plants. The rain still continued to pour down upon us, while the wind came shrieking up the wady, bearing along with it sand, leaves, and pieces of dry herbage. The camels, highly disapproving of such unusual weather, turned their faces

away from it and quietly lay down with their loads, so there was nothing else for us to do but wait patiently until the rain ceased. It lasted perhaps for about an hour after we had halted in Wady Chamilé, but it ceased as suddenly as it had commenced. The clouds as they drifted away resembled huge black mountains piled one upon another, and vanished swiftly into the unknown realms of space, leaving in their wake the brightest and bluest sky I ever gazed on. The sun now shone out hotly, making shrubs, plants, rocks, and soil give off vapour so rapidly that the wady for a brief period seemed partially veiled in a gauzy mist. It was really astounding to watch the rapidity with which everything dried as soon as the downpour ceased. In an incredibly short space of time one would have been disposed to deny the fact that any rain had fallen for some considerable period.

We had great fun in journeying along the wady with the hares that kept jumping from under the "retem" bushes, and scampering with all their might across or up or down the open space between the bushes. The appearance of a hare was the signal for a general chevy, the camel-train was for the time abandoned to its fate, while the Bedouins, soldiers, dragomans, with often myself included, dashed away in pursuit of the frightened hare. Very often the animal was observed to take shelter beneath a rock, or to creep beneath a bush of "retem." Then the pursuers ranged themselves round about, some with pistols, others with match-lock guns, many armed only with stones and sticks. No sooner did the hare appear than bang, bang, was heard in all directions, some of the reports being of the wheeziest description, and it was really a service of danger to be amongst the excited crowd of hunters. Not one amongst them seemed to care the least whose legs were in the line of fire when the game was afoot. So uncertain was the aim of these Bedouins, except in one or two exceptional cases, that not once did I ever see a hare knocked over while running, save by my own gun.

After following the course of the wady for about four miles it made a sudden bend towards the south-west. Here the sedimentary rocks run out, and the valley becomes remarkably narrow and extremely tortuous, being shut in on either side by immense wall-like cliffs of bare granite, intersected with dykes of a hard reddish porphyry-like stone. As I tramped along, the desert crow (*Corvus umbrinus*) stared at me from the ledges of rock, and hoarsely croaked out his displeasure. Overhead mere specks in the strip of sky seen through the tunnel-like gorge, vultures soared lazily without even moving their outstretched wings; but with these exceptions no other thing was visible. Although at this time the wady was quite dry, yet it could be very clearly made out that occasionally tremendous floods of water rushed down through it. This very remarkable valley is known as Wady Omongraf. We camped on a kind of alluvial terrace, after having marched about sixteen miles.

When the baggage-train arrived, my attention was called to the poultry crates, wherein I could perceive what looked to me extremely like a great many dead fowls. Such proved the melancholy fact. Twenty-seven of our best hens had died from the effects of the wind and rain; and what was more provoking, it happened from deliberate carelessness on the part of those who had charge of the baggage. If a few mats had been thrown over the crates in which

the fowls were carried, no harm would have accrued. This was a very serious loss to us, inasmuch as it lessened the daily supply of new-laid eggs. The fowls were taken with us for the purpose of being killed as required for food, but we soon discovered after we had started that they served a far more useful purpose. It was truly wonderful to see how readily they adapted themselves to their altered condition of life. After a few days' travelling they settled to a new camp when taken off the camel's back and liberated from their crate, just as though they had been hatched and reared in that particular locality; and, stranger still, the hens laid quantities of eggs every day. As soon as they were let out of prison, water was given them with grain carried for the purpose; their hunger and thirst satisfied, they scattered about the camp, each hen in search of some suitable locality for depositing her egg. Strange places, too, were chosen: the beds in our sleeping tents were favoured spots; the store boxes, especially if they contained straw, were generally overcrowded; many preferred the shade of the "retem" bushes; while one old hen, when we were at Wady Feiran, insisted upon laying her eggs upon the tangled branches of a tamarisk-tree. An Arab boy was hen-herd, and few eggs escaped his watchful surveillance. Many of the fowls we took away with us, I may mention *en passant*, returned with us again to Suez.

Our camping-ground was not very enjoyable, being entirely shut in by walls of rock 800ft. high, entirely bare of vegetation. Standing by my tent I could not make out the narrow entrance to the gorge we came down through, neither was I able to detect any opening leading out of this rock-bound spot; it reminded me of being in the dry bottom of an enormous well.

MENTAL PRODIGIES.

A PARAGRAPH lately went the round of the papers about a wonderful mental calculator in Scotland. He is, or was, a post-runner between Nairn and Cawdor. As a specimen of his powers, the "Elgin Courant" records that he gave correct answers to the five following questions in less than a minute, in presence of Mr. William Raitt, Free Church Institution, Nairn:—"Two chests tea, each 80lb., at 3s. 6½d.; twelve bars brown soap, each 3½lb. at 4½d.; seventeen bars white soap, each 4lb., at 5½d.; three bags sago, each 27lb., at 4½d.; and seven bags barley, each 19lb., at 1½d." He answered the following question correctly without noting down a single figure, and that, too, in a few seconds:—"Find the amount of £500 from March 1 to January 9, both days inclusive, at 4½ per cent.?" He was asked by Mr. Raitt how many letters there would be in a year's file of a daily newspaper of eight pages, each seven columns, each 190 lines, each forty-two letters? The answer 139,873,440 was given in a few seconds. After duly admiring the powers of this calculating Scotchman, the general subject of mental prodigies offers itself for a few passing remarks.

Among the curious, remarkable and interesting things which the wonder-seeking public is called upon to admire from time to time, mental prodigies are not wanting. Every generation does produce its

abnormal specimens of intuitive, and more or less spontaneous talent, which refuses to be accounted for in accordance with any known theory. The reader's experience must have been but scant, if he cannot from his own observation corroborate this assertion. Independent of the members of this irregular class, who from their notoriety are more or less public property—setting aside the calculating boys, the musical infant phenomenons, the baby elocutionists, the child chess-players, and others, who occasionally traverse the kingdom as exhibitions—he has in all probability met with others, who make no parade of their powers in a public way, whatever value they may attach to them. We imagine that our own experience in this matter may be no larger than other people's, but it has been sufficient to puzzle us not a little at times when attempting to reconcile facts with current and preconceived ideas. We shall cite one or two cases in point.

The first is that of an illiterate man, who, beyond the capacity of reading fluently, could boast no other result of education—who could not write his own name, and who was otherwise so weak in intellect as to be incapable of the simplest process of reasoning. In his own neighbourhood he was regarded as a kind of "innocent," wanting in responsibility, and up to middle age, when we first knew him, his preferred associates were the boys and young children of the place, who made him their companion and their butt. Yet this poor fellow possessed an amazing memory, the usual accompaniment of genius, though *his* mind in other respects seemed a mere blank. He would exhibit his powers when hungry or thirsty for the bribe of a meal or a mug of beer, but was obstinately deaf to those who sought to gratify their curiosity without paying for it. One of his feats was to repeat the names of all the inhabitants of the town, going through street by street, and reciting them in the order in which they dwelt—the town containing about six hundred householders. Another exploit was to read through a column of newspaper advertisements *once*, and then to recite the whole without prompting, either in the order they stood in or in the inverse order, or beginning at any given line, going on to the foot of the column, and then down from the top to the starting-point. At fair times and market times, it was not unusual to see him surrounded by the farmers and drovers, for whose amusement he would read off the placards or proclamations on the walls, with his back turned to them, after he had first briefly glanced at them; sometimes he would vary the performance by reading them backwards, a method quite as easy to him as the other. It would thus appear that his memory was purely mechanical; and that it was so we were assured by one who had known him from childhood, whose conviction it was that the poor fellow derived no sort of information from anything he read and afterwards repeated so readily. This man's one talent, which, had it been allied with ordinary intelligence, might have raised him to renown, was a snare and a curse to him, for it led him to a love of company and of drink, and ultimately to the sad fate of the drunkard.

Number Two is the case of a cobbler, who worked at his trade of cobbling shoes in a not very effectual style, from morning till night. He was a man of very mediocre powers in all respects but one—but in the one faculty of calculating and resolving crabbed problems in figures, he was, so far as our experience

goes, unrivalled. His capacity was well known in the neighbourhood, as was also his conceit, which was quite on a par with it, and was too apt to manifest itself on all occasions. He made his talent of use to himself by exacting a small charge for exhibiting it, for which purpose he kept in his shop a long black-board and a piece of chalk. If you paid him threepence, you might state any problem in figures you could think of; and he would take the chalk from you and write down the solution on the instant. For a shilling you might "keep up the game" as long as you chose. He would multiply long rows of figures by each other, apparently without a moment's reflection—dealing as rapidly and unerringly with fractions, and fractions of fractions, as with integers—and would set down the equivalent in a simple fraction of any number of compound ones the moment he had read them. Being once asked how many 11s. 7 $\frac{1}{2}$ d. there were in an enormous sum expressed by a dozen figures in the pounds' row, he replied immediately, "Well, there will be remainder so much (writing down the remainder), and *them's* the figures for answer" (jotting them down as fast as his fingers could move). One of his sensational exploits was what he called his "corresponding values." In this performance the examiner was to write down one amount, either of money, or goods of any measurable sort, or land, and to say in what kind he would have the equivalent—whether in money, or in any particular weight or measure. The moment the choice was made the cobbler would chalk down his "corresponding value," which was invariably found to be correct, although literally done at sight—the correspondence consisting in this: that when both amounts were reduced to their lowest terms, such lowest terms were found to be identical. To make this plain we will give a simple instance:—Suppose the examiner to have written down 24 tons, 12 cwt., 3 qrs., 20 lbs. avoirdupois, and to have asked for its correspondence in money—the cobbler would write without a moment's hesitation, £57 10s. 2d.; and whoever should reduce both to their lowest term would find the figures expressing it identical. This, however, gives but a faint idea of the man's faculty; he would have mocked at so simple a test, and would have preferred dealing with millions at the left hand and fractions at the right—and to say the truth, his examiners generally put the case pretty stiffly for him. Perhaps a scholar might say there is no great difficulty in this—that an algebraic formula might be readily devised for doing it with ease; but it must be remembered the cobbler knew nothing of algebra, and was in all other respects uneducated. The wonder is, not that such a thing can be done, but that a man of no training should be able to do so intuitively, without study, what others, with all the advantages of first-rate training, can only do by scientific method after years of application. Not the least curious feature in this man's case was the fact that he seemed to have no intelligible notion of the means by which he produced his results; at any rate, if he had, he was quite unable to give any explanation of them. He was invited to give a lecture at a mechanics' institute on mental arithmetic; and proud enough he was to accept the invitation. He came, with his long black-board and chalks, and did some most astonishing things in the calculating way, detaining the audience to a late hour as he performed one marvel after another. Not one of us, however, succeeded in getting the

least inkling of the process that passed so rapidly in his mind; and his replies to some questions put with the view of eliciting information on this head not only betrayed great irritation, but were so vague, confused, and contradictory, that no satisfaction could be derived from them. In this he differed from most persons who excel in a similar way—mental arithmeticians being generally terse and lucid in their explanations, and often astonishing us as much by the masterly methods they devise as by the certainty and rapidity of their results.

Under Number Three may be comprised some remarkable instances of musical proficiency, not to be accounted for on any theory of learning or teaching ever promulgated. One was that of two infants who performed privately in Paris in the year 1826—the elder, two years old, playing skilfully on a miniature violin, and the younger, aged only ten months, beating the tambourine with singularly appropriate emphasis, and in true time. Another was that of two children respectively five and seven years old, one of whom executed in brilliant style the classical music of Beethoven and Mozart on the pianoforte, while the other played exquisite accompaniments on the harp. A third instance is that of a young working lad quite self-taught, who practised the piano in his leisure hours, and who had the rare faculty of reproducing any music he had heard played: so perfect was his ear and so tenacious his memory, that he would bring away from a new opera the best portion of the music, including the entire overture, and was afterwards able to rehearse it at pleasure. This case, the reader will observe, is analogous to that of little Blind Tom, the southern negro boy—though it must be confessed that the little negro, looking to his total want of common intelligence in other matters, stands altogether unrivalled among musical prodigies.

We might quote other instances which, if less remarkable, are of a like kind with those already mentioned—among others the case of a boy of six, who drew with almost perfect fidelity, and could illustrate, with a lead pencil, any narrative or story related in his hearing; but the examples adduced are enough, and more than enough, for our present purpose.

Not, indeed, that we have any very definite purpose in view—the subject being one that does not admit of investigation from a scientific or philosophical starting-point: but we should like to jot down one or two thoughts about it which will recur to us occasionally, and which may not be without, at least, a suggestive interest to others.

There is a pseudo-scientific way of accounting for these marvels, with which some people appear to be satisfied, while others, among whom we must rank ourselves, see only in the supposed explanation an added difficulty. Thus, when the phrenologist attributes some wondrous faculty to a larger brain-space in a certain portion of the cranium—or the physiologist accounts for it on the score of superior nerve-force in a certain direction—so far from being enlightened we are only the more mystified: to heap wonder on wonder may serve to dumbfound a man, but makes him none the wiser.

Not being able to arrive at fact and certainty in regard to this subject, we are sometimes driven, spite of ourselves, to the region of speculation and probabilities. If our actual knowledge will not help us,

there are at least analogies to lessen our wonder. What men call nature is infinitely lavish and prodigal in her bounties in the natural world—scattering pearls in the dark beds of the ocean, and richest gems in the bowels of the earth; wasting her choicest treasures, as it were, in regions where there is no eye to see and admire, no intelligence to understand and appreciate. Is there not similar profuseness in scattering wealth of talents and faculties over the soil of humanity? We can give no reason in either case; but where we see incongruity, the Great Creator and Ruler may see perfect harmony and fitness, and whatever of his work we in our blindness may misunderstand, must be found, if we could judge it rightly, to be very good.

Again, how do we know but that the Author of every good gift may have designed to teach us by this seeming accidental dispensing of extraordinary faculties, that they are *not* the things upon which we ought to set the highest value; that, however much we prize them, they are trifles in his sight, and, if not employed in his service, are less than nothing and vanity?

Another thought, and we have done. History and science seem to teach us that among the destinies of the human race, the one purpose traceable through the vicissitudes of the centuries is progress—upward progress from low to high, from high to higher. If this upward progress is according to law—as assuredly it must be—may not the extraordinary mental powers which we regard as abnormal be more rightly regarded as instances of the sporadic action of a divine law, whose action is ultimately to become regular and recurring? If so, they may point to a time when the sons of men shall no longer need to spend their lives in acquiring knowledge, but shall fulfil the loftier function of applying and reaping the benefit of it—a time, however, which will not arrive until man's mental and spiritual nature shall have emerged into the clear light of day, and he is filled by moral purity to deal with a vaster force of intellectual power.

THE HOUSE OF DE VALDEZ.

CHAPTER XXIII.—A SURPRISE.

As a man may stand on the brink of ruin and not see the precipice, so good fortune, ay, the crown of all his hopes, may be at the door while he sits in despair within. Edward Digby sat in his lodging in the house of a French barber much resorted to by foreigners of distinction, because it afforded better accommodation than most houses of the kind in Toledo, and its master, appropriately named De Savonnette, was honest and trustworthy to the degree of allowing nobody to impose on them but himself. Well, Digby sat there, in his lonely room, and in a weary mood. He was not a man to be easily baffled in any pursuit which his mind was bent on; but his quest after the daughter of De Valdez seemed hopeless, and many dangers were thickening round his path in Spain. He had heard nothing of the Moor since he gave him the order to his faithful lieutenant and his good ship, and time sufficient for all Yusuf's purposes had elapsed; himself had been about the Casa de Fonseca and its neighbourhood, looking out for some end of a clue to Rosada's whereabouts, but in vain; and Lope Mendez, on a similar catching at straws, was gone to a certain coffee-house

much frequented by Doña Constanza's gentlemen-at-arms after vespers, for the evening was far advanced. His thoughts were sad and sombre, but a knock at the door interrupted them,—his landlord came to say that Señor Antonio Diaz of Cordova craved private speech with him. "Some matter concerning letters of exchange or credit," thought Digby, but he greeted Antonio with his usual courtesy. The merchant had always looked grave beyond the common, and old before his time, but now there was something worn and haggard in his face. He shut the door carefully, made a brief response to Digby's civilities, but without taking the offered seat, stepped close up to him and placed a small packet in his hand.

"Noble captain," said the merchant, "take charge of this for the Señorita Rosada de Valdez. It is a fair piece of jeweller's work, which she would not accept from my hand, but she will from yours. I loved the fair lady as well as you do,—maybe I loved her better, for years make even our follies strong—and it was folly, for she loved not me—it was not to be expected that she would, and there were great gulfs between us; but for her sake I have come to tell you that the fair and young señorita whom you are vainly seeking is at this moment shut up in the convent of St. Angelica, which you must know, for it stands alone, on the banks of the Tagus, less than a league from the city."

"Señor Diaz, I know it well; and if it is ever in my power to serve you or yours I will rejoice to do it in return for the intelligence you have given me this evening;" and Digby grasped Antonio's thin, cold hand, and shook it heartily.

"Noble captain, if you can make use of my tidings to effect the lady's release from those gloomy walls, which I know she will be joyful to leave, it will be return enough for me. I do not envy your fortunes," said the merchant, "but I would that my own had been like them; and more than that, I would that your faith were mine, for they say it makes men free, and I can find neither truth nor freedom. Noble captain, if one of the despised race of Israel, who lives in fear of his own people on the one side, and the Christians of this land on the other, should ever seek refuge in your country, would you own and protect him for the acquaintance of this hour?"

"That I would, and will, at the risk of my life and fortune; but there is safety for men of all races in England," said Digby. "Come and settle there, Señor Diaz, and, if so minded, you will find not only civil liberty, but the truth which makes men free indeed."

"There are steps approaching, and I may not be seen here. Farewell! and all good fortune attend you on the enterprise which I know you meditate; but move quickly, for you have keen and crafty enemies to deal with," said Antonio, and, drawing down his cap till it half hid his face, he hurried out, just as Lope Mendez entered, bringing with him Yusuf the Moor.

"Welcome, my friend," said Digby; "and how stands your case?"

"Well as I could wish," said Yusuf. "Don Lorenzo and my hard-won treasure are safe on board the Mermaid, which now rides at anchor in Lisbon Bay; and a boat's crew of your English sailors, piloted by an old friend of Lope's father, Monro, the Portuguese smuggler—who is half a Moor by his mother's side, and knows every rock and rapid of the Tagus—have brought me up stream, to get my bride,

Gulinda. Her good father, Elasco, has come with me, and means to go the length of England to see us married; for the sooner we can leave this land the better. Doña Constanza and all her forces have been inquiring after the lost gentlewoman, but made out nothing, thanks to the rigid observance of old Moslem rules by the worthy family with whom she is lodged: the father goes to mass, but the mother and three daughters keep strictly in the harem."

"How many English sailors have you here?" said Digby.

"Fifteen," said Yusuf. "They rather crowded the boat, wishing to see you. There are, besides, the pilot Monro and his son, whom I left in charge of the boat where it lies anchored, in one of the quietest creeks in the world, just behind the convent of St. Angelica, while the sailors and the shepherd came to the town with me in a very quiet manner, and are now in the posada de San Pedro, with our old friend, its Catalonian landlord. But, noble Digby, Lope has told me of the misadventures in your wooing, which promised so fair, and I doubt there is some foul play."

"That there is," said Digby; and he repeated Antonio's intelligence, which, indeed, explained everything to the minds of the three; adding, "Now it is my purpose, with the help of Providence and as many fitting men as I can get to join in the adventure, to force the place and set the lady free, for I know she is there imprisoned. Moreover, I have her father's word—which is above the authority of these Fonsecas and Taveras in the mind of any honest man—that he, above all things, dreaded that his daughter should be shut up in a convent; and, as a freeborn Englishman, I hold that there is nothing contrary to honour and conscience in taking her hence if it can be compassed. At any rate, I am resolved, for the love I bear to the fair señorita, and the hatred in which I hold all injustice and oppression, to make the attempt this night, that we may all go down stream together, for the lady shall be honourably placed in her father's protection on board of my ship, if it be in the power of man. I can depend on my English sailors, but their number is small. Señor Yusuf, are there in your large acquaintance any men of courage and discretion who would take part in the enterprise for a sure return in good gold ducats?"

"My people are good for trusty service and secret stratagem," said Yusuf, "but not for bold adventure, else had they never been exiles from the land of Spain; as to others, I know a certain Captain O'Reilly from Ireland and seven of his countrymen, all in the king's guard. I cannot vouch for their discretion, noble Digby, but I will for their courage, and it is my opinion that for the liberation of a fair lady they would storm the Alcazar and bring out the wooden Philip, etiquette and all."

"Don't I miss my father now?" said Lope; "he could have found your honour twenty stout fellows in any town in Spain, acquainted with the smuggling business, and fit for anything; but I know three of the right sort here in Toledo. They are all Biscayans, and if your honour can trust De Savonnette, as I am sure you may, for he takes a great interest in love affairs, he knows half-a-dozen smart hands in the French ambassador's train."

"Good," said Digby; "then, my friends, get up your company as well armed as may be. It is now nine o'clock, and I mean to commence operations

about twelve. Our rendezvous shall be at the creek where your boat lies, Señor Yusuf. I shall go to the posada and speak with my sailors, who have been with me in many a more desperate enterprise, and leave you to arrange with the rest."

Rosada de Valdez was sitting on the stone floor of her cell without light, except that of a cold moonbeam that flickered in through the bars of the grated window. It was the short sleeping-time allowed to the inhabitants of the convent between vespers and matins, but Rosada could not sleep for the weight of her despair. Some weeks of her unwilling noviciate had now passed away. She had kept fasts and vigils; she had been called up to matins at two in the morning and to orisons at four; the Reverend Mother Florencia had expounded to her the duties of a sister in that convent; the reverend mother's confessor had examined her conscience without finding much for a use of terror, but he did his best. The rule of perpetual meditation had been relaxed in her favour, that the elder nuns might reconcile her to a religious life, and their mode of doing so was at least peculiar. It consisted of minute accounts of the penances and austerities expected from everybody under the rule of St. Angelica, and tales of the apparitions occasionally to be seen in their chapel, with now and then a judiciously dropped hint that a novice who thought the discipline too hard for her would be wise to get back to the world on any terms. All this time the girl had seen neither friend nor acquaintance, had heard nothing of life beyond the walls, against which her young heart beat as a poor imprisoned bird beats against the bars of its cage. She had hoped that Digby would in some way interfere on her behalf—that his noble rank and courteous manner would weigh with Doña Constanza; but the hope had waned away. The slow march of time is too steady and strong for youth. She had given herself up to the convent, as it were, and tried to think that there lay her way to heaven, and that she had nothing on earth to hope for; but despair came instead of resignation.

She had sat on the stone floor since vespertime, the white moonbeam falling on her long black hair, so soon to be shorn away, and covered with a blacker veil; the cell door barred upon her, and no sound to be heard within or without the lonely house but the rush of the neighbouring river. All at once it was lost in a thundering noise at the convent gate, which made Rosada spring to her feet, and seemed to rouse the entire sisterhood, for screams of terror and sounds of flying feet rose in every direction. But the noise outside rose above them, louder, louder still, as if the convent gate were being burst or battered in. The building was an old one, and like everything in Spain, going quietly to decay; a few more blows, and there was a crash like iron and stone work coming down together; a smothered shout of men's voices, a ringing chorus of female screams, a brief parley, the shrill tones of Mother Florencia exclaiming: "I declare, señor, there is no such person in this convent."

But could Rosada trust her ears, it was the voice of Captain Digby that answered: "Madam, I know the lady is within your walls, and if she is not brought here to speak with me in ten minutes, my men shall search the house from garret to cellar."

Rosada rushed to the barred door, and would have uttered a cry for deliverance, but the next moment

the bolt was withdrawn, and Sister Ignacia carrying a light, and white with fear, seized her by the shoulder—Rosada felt the clutch of her thin fierce fingers for many a day after—and muttering something about her friends the English pirates, drew her into the courtyard, where the sisters of perpetual meditation, in the habits which luckily served them both for night and day, stood clustered in open doors, some screaming, and some praying, while a body of armed men occupied the ruined gateway, and Captain Digby advanced from their head to meet her.

"Noble señorita," he said, with a bow low and reverend enough to be made before the Queen of Spain, "your father, Don Lorenzo, whom you have long believed to be dead, is alive and well on board of my English ship. I know that your detention here would be against his will, I believe it is against your own, and if you will accept my protection as that of a brother, I pledge my honour to conduct you to him with all respect and courtesy, that you may make a free choice of your own future."

"Noble captain," said Rosada, in tones that trembled with surprise and joy, "I gratefully accept your protection, because I know that under it any lady would be safe."

"Would you go with heretics, pirates, and cannibals from England, wretched girl?" cried Mother Florencia, breaking out of a cloister, and attempting to lay hold of her. But Captain Digby stepped between.

"Spare your exertions, reverend madam," he said, "lest my men be incited to follow your example after their own fashion; the lady knows with whom she is going. Please to bring the señorita her mantilla," he continued to Sister Ignacia, who stood gnashing her teeth by the reverend mother's side. His tone was calm and low, but the mantilla was brought. It was afterwards found that Sister Ignacia had rent a considerable piece out of the garment. But Rosada put it on, modestly covering her face, while Digby, drawing her arm within his, in the English fashion, led her out of the ruined gate, his men silently following. Outside there stood a tall man in a mask, who wished him joy in a whisper. "Thank you, Captain O'Reilly," said Digby, in the same tone, "I shall never forget the service you and your Irishmen have done to me this night; but please to keep guard round the convent till sunrise. Let nobody leave it to give the alarm. A few hours start with the seaward current of the Tagus will take us out of danger."

"Never fear, we'll keep them in every soul till broad daylight, and say we are here to keep bad characters from robbing the precious nuns, if anybody comes this way," said Captain O'Reilly in English, but with a pretty strong accent.

"A thousand thanks," said Digby, and lighted by the few lanterns his men carried, he conducted Rosada down to the river's bank; there, in a quiet creek behind her late prison, the barge of the Mermaid lay moored, with some figures on board.

"Sit beside me, dear Rosada, we are both free now," said one of them from under a mantilla, as he handed her in; and Elasco's daughter and the daughter of De Valdez clasped each other in their arms once more, but only with whispered greetings. Old Monro the pilot took the helm, the sailors took the oars, Digby unfastened the moorings, Yusuf said, "Farewell to Spain, and all her evils," and the barge glided swiftly down the rapid current of the Tagus.

GOVERNESSES' DIPLOMAS IN FRANCE.

THE public examinations of governesses in France are productive of excellent results. A girl has few chances of obtaining a good situation as governess, and is not considered qualified to be a parish school-mistress, or head of a *pensionnat*, unless she has passed the first and second examinations, and obtained the necessary diploma. This certificate is at least practical evidence of the amount of study she has gone through, and a proof that she possesses the knowledge requisite for teaching. If this system, which is not compulsory, were adopted in England, there would not be so many incompetent governesses.

These examinations generally take place twice a year, in spring and in autumn, and are held at the chief town of each department. There are usually separate examinations for those who desire to obtain their first diploma, and for those who, having procured the first, aspire to the second. In the first case, a thorough knowledge of the language, and a competent acquaintance with arithmetic, is required; but *aspirantes* for the higher diploma are examined in natural philosophy, chemistry, botany, and zoology, while some knowledge of the grammar of music and of mechanical drawing is expected.

I happened to be present at one of these examinations at Epinal, the chief town of the department of the Vosges. Our friend and governess, Mdle. J—, had prepared two girls for the examination, and, as a favour, another young lady and I were allowed to accompany them. We left St. Dié, in its mountain shelter, behind us, and gradually the hills dwindled into distant slopes, till we found ourselves passing through a flat, uninteresting country, where the broad grass plains were varied by apparently endless rows of young trees, standing in relief against a dull grey sky. It was a sombre spring evening, and neither the lowering weather, nor the anticipations of the morrow, were enlivening, especially to our two *aspirantes*, one of whom, a clergyman's daughter, was anxious to succeed, that she might gratify her parent's wishes; while the other, an orphan, had to depend on her own efforts for a livelihood, and to her, therefore, success or failure was a matter of vital importance.

It was dark when we arrived at Epinal, and there another *aspirante* joined our party. The antecedents of this candidate were interesting as illustrative of the French system of equality in public instruction. Her father was a peasant, and since his death her mother had kept their little farm, worked in the fields, and drudged as only a Frenchwoman in that class of life can drudge, while her son and daughter devoted themselves to *les belles lettres*. By dint of determined study, the son had procured a diploma, and the daughter, having been under the tuition of the village schoolmaster, now presented herself at Epinal as an *aspirante*. She wore her peasant's stuff gown, and white cap, carrying her books, papers, and pens in a basket on her arm. Our governess asked her a few questions as to her mode of study, and from the expression of countenance with which the answers were received, we suspected that she had little chance of success.

The morning of the eventful day came. We were up early, and while the sleepy waiter was preparing our coffee, we looked out of the window and saw

Epinal for the first time. The river Moselle rolled past the hotel windows, and a low thick bridge spanned it to the left, while the walls of the opposite houses rose abruptly from the water's edge. At half-past seven we set off to the "Palais de Justice." We passed over the bridge, and went up a narrow street, whose irregularly-built houses, with first floors projecting beyond the sunken doorways, latticed windows, quaint red-tiled roofs, old Latin inscriptions cut in rough letters above some of the entrances, combined to produce on the mind an impression of the age, if not of the beauty, of Epinal architecture. But on entering the large stone-paved square before the "Palais de Justice," I felt inclined to retract the denial of beauty, for the "Palais" had an imposing façade of columns, and a broad flight of stone steps; while, to the left of the square, there was a very old church built in a decrepit style, but whose ugliness was redeemed by a ruined and massive archway. The hall where the examinations take place is also the court of justice: there is a platform at one end for the judge, while lower down at either side there are seats like pews for the witnesses.

There were about fifteen candidates, some introduced by the nuns, others quite alone, and one or two accompanied by friends. They took their places at long desks at either side of the lower part of the hall. Shortly before eight o'clock two gentlemen arrived: after a few minutes' talk one went away again and the other announced that the examination would commence by his dictating to the young ladies a page of French, in which page, as transferred to their copybooks, three mistakes alone were allowable. This dictation was the test of the merit of the *aspirantes*; if the three mistakes were not exceeded, they had every chance of success; otherwise, there was an end of all hope for the present. The examiner was very lenient. He spoke slowly and distinctly, he repeated difficult sentences, he actually paused where the punctuation might be puzzling, and apologised for his indulgence in the most gracious manner. All passed through the ordeal successfully except the peasant's daughter, who, not fully prepared and very nervous, had lost her self-possession, and five faults placed her beyond the pale of success. This was gently intimated to her, but she was told she might continue to occupy her place for the morning, that it might not be supposed she had ignominiously failed at the outset.

The morning seemed very long. There was given a composition on "Pedagogy," or the art of teaching; this was followed by sums in arithmetic; then there were copies of handwriting to be done. But at twelve o'clock everybody separated for dinner, glad to know that half the examination was over.

At one o'clock we returned to the "Palais de Justice," and found a very cross-looking "person" enthroned near one of the windows. She became at once the centre of our hopes and fears. The candidates gathered round her, and produced their needlework. An hour's talking, laughing, and working went on, and then this "person" examined the different pieces of stitching and embroidery. It was a moment of suspense, as marks for needlework were considered indispensable. We had been told that this "person," being a Roman Catholic, and a great "devotee" under the influence of the priests, would not scruple to refuse marks to those candidates who were Protestant, while she would be more than indulgent to *aspirantes* under the nuns' charge. In fact,

one of the latter, evidently taken from the lowest peasant class, displayed so much ignorance, that M. l'Abbé, who was prowling up and down, threw in a little ecclesiastical influence to counterbalance the conspicuous want of proficiency in his protégée.

The hour for needlework being over, the examiners began to arrive. A paper was handed to them apprising them of the result of the past hour. One of the examiners, an inspector of schools for public instruction, was a friend of our governess, and to him she related the instance of favouritism which we had just witnessed. Finding that our two *aspirantes* had not a single mark for proficiency in needlework, and believing that they deserved a high place, we laid the case before the inspector. After a short consultation with his colleagues, he took the work and disappeared into an inner room to discuss with the other gentlemen the respective merits of hemming, darning, and stitching. We were much amused at the perplexed face with which he appeared every now and then, and appealed to our governess for explanations of certain mysterious stitches; but at last we had the pleasure of seeing the work brought to us, and of hearing that Messrs. the Examiners thought it deserving of several marks.

Then commenced the most difficult work of the day, the *vidé voce* examination. It began with a religious catechism; and the unusual sight of M. le Pasteur, M. l'Abbé, and the Rabbén of the synagogue, in close approximation, was witnessed.

By this time we began to know who would be the rejected candidates, and who would be the first on the list of the accepted. In the working out of arithmetical problems on the black-board the examiners were very strict; but in grammar, history, and geography they were more lenient.

At five o'clock all was over, and the examiners retired to compare notes and count up marks. We wished to catch our train, so the inspector assured us we might leave, as he would arrange everything, and send the diplomas to our *aspirantes* who were certain of success. Before we left we saw the sister of charity looking very disconsolate, and the nuns evidently much chagrined, so we inferred therefrom that even M. l'Abbé's influence had failed to secure the desired diploma.

The first on the list was a pretty young Jewess, whose ready answers and self-possession had proved that she was well prepared. We met her at the station, and congratulated her upon her success. She smiled and said, "Oh! I knew I should be the first." And so ended the examination-day at Epinal.

Unseen Flowers and Unheard Songs.

RANGING a lonely wood at dusk last night,
I saw spring flowers spread out in dazzling sheets
Of white and gold, a galaxy of sweets,
With no one near to admire the lustrous sight.
Awake this morning when the first dim light
Of dawning day the wavering darkness meets,
A glorious burst of song my rapt ear greets;
A thousand throats in harmony unite,
While the world slept. But though unnoticed blowing
In unfrequented woods those spring flowers die;
Though when men heed not music sweet is flowing,
Those songs God hears, those flowers attract His eye;
And when lone hearts with grateful love are glowing,
God sees that flower, that music mounts on high.

RICHARD WILTON, M.A.

Varieties.

THE SCHOOLMASTER MAKES THE SCHOOL.—The real "religious difficulty" lies beyond the field of present discussion. A schoolmaster might use both Bible and Catechism, and yet teach infidelity; while another teacher with none but secular books might train pupils to be good Christians as well as good citizens. Everything depends on the spirit in which the work of education is undertaken. Let right provision be made for the training and for the election of schoolmasters, with facilities for the removal of those who are found to be unworthy of the confidence of parents and guardians, and the "religious difficulty" would disappear.

RUSSIAN REVENUE.—The total is 286,000,000 roubles. Of this sum 86,000,000 are derived from direct contributions, and 189,000,000 from the duties levied on articles of consumption and other indirect sources. The amount derived from direct taxes is nearly all supplied by the capitation tax, the proportion furnished by this tax being 81 per cent. of the gross sum. The "Moscow Gazette," quoted by the "Journal of St. Petersburg," observes, that this state of things is not just, and it therefore proposes to substitute a modification in the manner in which it is levied by dividing the population into classes, or, in other words, by adopting the principle on which the income-tax is levied in this country. The "Gazette" also points out how greatly the national revenue might be increased by a more extensive imposition of stamp and other duties of a similar kind. Of the amount derived from indirect taxation 131,000,000 roubles are contributed by the excise duty on spirits, and 11,600,000 on salt. The sum paid by the peasantry located on the state domains is at present 35,000,000 annually, but this will go on diminishing year by year until it is ultimately extinguished in consequence of their becoming freeholders.

CLERKS IN THE CITY.—In some parts of London it is impossible to find a sufficient number of skilled workmen in various departments both of useful and ornamental art; such as joiners, decorators, and even carpenters and metalworkers. The young men who ought to supply the demand prefer starving on the "beggary respectability" of office work. A correspondent of one of the daily papers hits the mark when he says:—"There is a growing dislike to manual labour amongst the lower section of the middle class which is painfully apparent to those who see much of commercial life. Parents are eager to get their sons into houses of business where they may maintain the appearance, if not the standing, of gentlemen. The City is crowded with well-educated lads, who are doing men's work for boys' wages. Respectable firms are not ashamed to engage these boys for merely nominal pay, the pretence being that they will acquire business habits and 'get on.' I know counting-houses where nearly all the drudgery is done by these raw youths, with the aid of one or two experienced clerks, also well worked and as ill paid. It is quite useless to argue with parents, and urge the propriety of sending boys to learn a trade; the idea of a lad returning from his work in the evening with dirty hands, and clad in fustian or corduroy, is quite shocking to their respectability, and so the evil is perpetuated, and the prospect of the clerk becomes more gloomy from year to year."

CATS.—The legal status of cats, rather a knotty point, has at length been defined by the Sheriff of Aberdeen in an elaborate interlocutor. For the sake of the tabbies, we are sorry that the sheriff has pronounced them the pariahs of creation—but we fear they have only themselves to blame. The finding was given on a claim for damages for a cat killed in a trap set in a florist's garden. On a full consideration of the nature and habits of cats, the sheriff held that when not on their owners' premises they must take the consequences of the casualties they encounter. Owners must take care of their cats, and are not entitled to damages unless the injuries be inflicted wilfully or wantonly. Cats, continued the sheriff, generally indulge in nocturnal visits. A night watch in order to detect and drive them off is impossible; fences and box-traps are too elaborate; the discharge of firearms is prevented by the Police Acts; and the laying down of poisoned food is also illegal. There are cats and cats; for one that has an owner there are ten who have none. An ownerless cat is undoubtedly vermin, and may be killed. If a person is entitled to kill one cat, he is surely entitled to kill another, notwithstanding that it may have "a local habitation," and even, perhaps, "a name." If the cat chooses to congregate, even for so short a time, with the "lapsed masses" of its own species, it must suffer all the consequences. The uniform colour of cats in the dark is proverbial; and during the night all cats must be considered as "free lances." Thus the claim for damages could not be sustained.